United Nations A/56/419

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 September 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session
Agenda item 25
United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Letter dated 27 September 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

With reference to General Assembly resolutions 53/22, 54/111 and 55/23 on the "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations", I take pleasure in enclosing a document entitled "Salzburg Reflections". The document emanated from the "Salzburg Dialogue among Civilizations: A New Paradigm of International Relations", which took place in Schloss Fuschl near Salzburg, Austria, on 28 August 2001 (see annex).

I would greatly appreciate if you would arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 25.

(*Signed*) Gerhard **Pfanzelter**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations

01-55659 (E) 011001

Annex to the letter dated 27 September 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Salzburg Reflections

Salzburg Dialogue among Civilizations (28 August 2001)

The Salzburg Dialogue among Civilizations was convened in the framework of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, bringing together participants from various regions and backgrounds to discuss the potential of the Dialogue among Civilizations as a new paradigm of international relations. The results of these discussions will feed into the ongoing work of the United Nations on this subject, which will culminate in a special session of the General Assembly on 3 and 4 December 2001.

The following are some of the reflections which emanate from the discussions:

As the reality of a more interdependent world is pushing us ever closer together, we will have to improve our management of diversity.

Science, technology, communication, migration, trade, finance and disease are becoming increasingly borderless, affecting our societies in an unprecedented manner. Yet, culture and religion are re-emerging as major driving forces in the political set-up of our world.

Globalization and localization are two sides of the same coin, but it may need dialogue to avoid confrontation between the two. Dialogue necessitates a change of mindset, which has to be based on trust. Civilizations are anchored in a common set of values we all share and in our common aspiration for peace, justice, partnership and truth.

The most practical way to create trust is "to build together" across the divide. We recognize a growing fatigue with human conflict and violence, therefore we are witnessing a common yearning for human solidarity. Much has been accomplished by the existing international institutions, yet much more has to be done.

The new heroes of this dialogue will be different from our heroes of the past. They will be those who stand ready to extend their hand, to listen to the other, to take advantage of the commonality that unites us, and to expand our faith in our common humanity.

What we can pass on to the next generations is therefore a willingness to learn from each other instead of a fear of diversity. Future generations will bear witness to the realization of a successful policy of dialogue and reap the fruits. It is our responsibility to sow the seeds.

The call for a dialogue among civilizations comes from those who want to meet this challenge aimed at governance through inclusion.

"War begins in the mind of those who perceive diversity as a threat" (John Hume). "Peace begins in the mind of those who perceive diversity as an element of betterment and growth" (Kofi Annan).